ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

UNITED NATIONS

DELEGATION'S GUIDE

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Digital Citizenship

Nowadays, digital technology is part of almost everything we do: we study, play, shop, share opinions, find information, talk to others, express ideas, and support causes we care about by using digital technology. Screens are not just tools for entertainment; they are also places where we build relationships, express our thoughts, and make decisions. We live in a world where the digital sphere is no longer separate from real life—it's an important part of it.

In this context, the concept of digital citizenship refers to the set of rights, responsibilities, and skills that allow people to actively participate in society through digital media. It's not just about knowing how to use technology, but about using it critically, ethically, and responsibly. Digital citizenship involves understanding how digital platforms work, how information is created and spread online, and the impact of our actions in the digital world.

The influence of digital technologies on our lives makes us rethink rights such as privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information, especially when data is massively collected, messages circulate uncontrolled, and misinformation can lead to real-world consequences. At the same time, it encourages us to take responsibility by promoting respectful participation, challenging online discrimination, and defending digital spaces that are fairer, safer, and more democratic. Digital citizenship is therefore an essential part of full citizenship: it doesn't replace participation in public life, it extends it to the digital world.

For young people, who are growing up in an environment deeply influenced by digital technology, understanding and exercising digital citizenship isn't optional; it's part of their daily lives and how they interact with the world. Knowing their online rights, protecting their privacy, expressing themselves freely yet responsibly, and participating actively in online discussions are ways of defending democracy in virtual environments. Being part of this transformation means committing to using the internet not only for personal benefit but also to build more inclusive, respectful, and supportive digital spaces for everyone.

1. United Nations Economic and Social Council

The committee

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations established by the Charter of the United Nations (UN) in 1945.[1] The ECOSOC plays a key role in promoting sustainable development (economically, socially and environmentally).[2] It is a central forum for discussions, finding new ideas, and building agreement on global goals[3]. ECOSOC also coordinates efforts to reach these objectives and monitors outcomes from major UN conferences.[4]

Mandate of ECOSOC

The main role of ECOSOC is to coordinate activities among different UN agencies and bodies. [5] ECOSOC can prepare reports and studies on economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and other related issues.[6] It provides recommendations on these issues to countries, the General Assembly and specialized agencies.[7] ECOSOC can also Coordinate the work of its committees and UN specialized agencies, review the progress on its goals and activities, and organize international meetings on important global topics.[8]

Composition, voting and procedures

ECOSOC is composed of 54 Member States, 18 of which are elected each year by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms under a system of rotation that ensures equitable geographic representation.[9] ECOSOC proceedings are overseen by a President and a Vice-President, which together comprise the Dias, whom sets ECOSOC's agenda, devises action plans and collaborates with the Secretariat on administrative duties.[10] Each ECOSOC member has one vote, and decisions are made by a majority of members present and voting. [11]

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[1] Charter of the United Nations. 1945. art. 7.
[2] https://ecosoc.un.org/en/about-us
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Charter of the United Nations. 1945. art. 62.
[8] Charter of the United Nations. 1945. art. 62, art. 63.
[9] Charter of the United Nations. 1945. art. 61.
[10] Charter of the United Nations. 1945. art. 72.
[11] Charter of the United Nations. 1945. art. 67.

2. Opportunities and limitations of technological advances and AI and its impact on the labour market

Technological advances, especially artificial intelligence (AI), are transforming the global labour market. On the one hand, these developments create opportunities such as new jobs, increased productivity and improved working conditions. On the other hand, they bring significant challenges, including job losses, rising inequality and the urgent need to train and adapt current and future workers.

Among the benefits, new technology-driven sectors and professions are emerging. Automation of repetitive tasks boosts productivity and technological innovation leads to economic growth. Moreover, flexible work arrangements through remote working and digital platforms allow employees to spend more time at home and balance their personal and professional lives.

However, these changes also present new challenges. Automation may lead to unemployment as traditional jobs disappear. Economic gaps could widen between skilled and unskilled workers, and reliance on technology might increase inequalities regarding access to training and education. Additionally, new forms of work (such as temporary or freelance jobs, and platform-based jobs like Uber) could lead to job insecurity and precarious working conditions.

Specifically regarding AI, there is a risk that it may replace intellectual and creative tasks previously performed exclusively by humans. Ethical dilemmas also arise from using AI to monitor employees or automate decision-making processes at work. Moreover, biases in AI systems may lead to automated workplace discrimination.

ECOSOC's Perspective on Technological Advances and AI

The United Nations is increasingly concerned about technological advancements and AI due to their significant global social and economic impact. Several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are particularly relevant, including SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

In a special meeting in May 2024 about Artificial Intelligence and the SDGs, ECOSOC highlighted AI's potential to accelerate progress towards achieving these goals through improved efficiency, innovation and decision-making.[12] However, significant challenges were also recognized, such as striking a balance between innovation and regulation, standardizing rules across different national legal frameworks and addressing ethical and social implications[13].

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[12] UN DESA Voice May 2024, https://desapublications.un.org/un-desa-voice/more-from-undesa/may-2024/ecosoc-examines-ai-advance-sustainable-development

[13] Special meeting of the Economic and Social Council on Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for the Sustainable Development Goals, https://ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Informal-summary-ECOSOC-AI-meeting.pdf

Additionally, in Resolution E/RES/2024/14, ECOSOC emphasized the critical role of science, technology and innovation (STI) in achieving the SDGs. Rapid technological changes were acknowledged as key factors for improving economic outcomes, implementing new solutions more quickly and broadly, and promoting more inclusive participation in social and economic life. The resolution also underscored the urgent need for societies to develop digital skills and competencies, allowing them to adapt to and benefit from technological transformations.

3. To keep thinking and debating at MONUUNQ

We invite all delegates to explore this topic from different angles: regulation and public policy, labour market and social rights, and international cooperation and technological development. Below are some guiding questions to help delegations structure their speeches and proposals **during committee sessions:**

Axis 1: Regulation and Public Policy

- Which national and international regulations currently exist—or should be created—regarding the use of artificial intelligence in the workplace?
- How can we ensure a balance between technological innovation and the protection of labour and ethical rights at work?
- What public policies can States implement to support a just transition for workers affected by automation and job displacement?

Axis 2: Labour Market and Social Rights

- What strategies are countries adopting to reduce the skills gap between workers with different levels of technological training?
- How can we protect workers in new types of employment (such as freelancing, platform-based work, or remote work) from job insecurity and loss of labour rights?
- What role should the States play in ensuring equal access to digital education and training opportunities?

Axis 3: International Cooperation and Technological Development

- Which ECOSOC resolutions or reports have addressed technological advances and AI in relation to the labour market?
- What kind of international cooperation is needed to ensure that technological progress benefits all countries and does not widen existing inequalities?
- How can more developed countries support less developed ones in facing the labour-related challenges brought by automation and artificial intelligence?